



## **Teacher education for a sustainable development from pilot projects and initiatives to new structures**

### **A memorandum on reorienting teacher education in Germany, Austria and Switzerland**

1

During the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005–2014, which ends this year, the international community has agreed that universal access to education for sustainable development is a prerequisite for shaping responsible and innovative education – today and in the future. Teachers play a key role in this. Their knowledge and competences are crucial for restructuring educational processes and educational institutions towards sustainability. Teacher education must meet this challenge by reorienting itself towards education for sustainable development as demanded by international declarations, such as UNECE’s Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development, the Bonn Declaration of 2009, as well as in educational policy papers of German-speaking countries.

The UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005–2014 has served as both a national and international platform from which to elaborate and evaluate concepts for education for sustainable development within the different educational sectors. Pilot projects for preschool, school and higher education have shown the potential for how this understanding might shape present and future education, as well as improve the quality of educational institutions. Education for sustainable development can promote:

- a greater awareness and sensitivity for the relationship of human beings and the natural world
- the willingness and ability to take part in shaping one’s immediate surroundings towards a sustainable development
- an openness for cultural diversity and the development of global citizenship.

Preschool children, students at school, as well as those in higher education feel that they

are being taken seriously and become motivated. Teachers who participated in a professional training course in education for sustainable development confirmed that they gained a lot. Local authorities integrate education for a sustainable development as an important tool within their strategy for local and regional development.

However, pilot projects and initiatives alone do not highlight the crucial role of education for the necessary transformation process of society towards a sustainable development. Education for a sustainable development must become anchored in the structures of the educational system. The approaches undertaken in Switzerland provide an initial stimulus.

## 2

This memorandum addresses the necessary changes concerning the content and structure of teacher education in higher education (*Hochschulen, Universitäten* in German-speaking countries), as well as in in-service training. It is based on experiences with different approaches of institutionalising education for a sustainable development in the German-speaking countries.

This memorandum was established by the German-speaking network **lefla** – Teacher Education for a Sustainable Development. It was founded in January 2013 as part of the international network for Reorienting Teacher Education to Address Sustainability of the UNESCO Chair Professor Charles Hopkins. There are now 24 higher education institutions as well as four institutions that foster teacher education in the networks from Germany, Austria and Switzerland. They share a common goal of structurally anchoring education for a sustainable development by means of exchanging experiences and ideas and by participating in educational policy discourse.

This memorandum is addressed to the institutions of teacher education themselves, to those in ministries and state institutions who are responsible for teacher education and professional development. It is also aimed at those partners who should be reorienting teacher education towards a sustainable development: kindergartens, schools, non-formal educational institutions as partners in practice; communities as places of learning for a sustainable development; non-governmental organisations, associations and foundations that both organise and make the experiences of civil society accessible to others; and business enterprises and cultural institutions that have their own particular perspectives on topics and issues in sustainable development.

## 3

Teachers should be enabled to:

- explicitly reflect on the concept and challenge of sustainable development and their own role in this process
- critically understand the discourse on and the practice of education for a sustainable development in its global context

- develop their own integrative view of the issues and challenges of a sustainable development by taking into account the social, ecological, economic and cultural dimensions from the perspective of the principles and values of a sustainable development including that of generational and global justice
- take disciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary perspectives on issues of global change and their regional and local manifestations
- find motivation through successful practical experiences in working with the concept of education for a sustainable development
- make critical use of existing knowledge and its social value to facilitate the advance of a sustainable development
- reflect on the importance of their own field of expertise for a sustainable development and gain new perspectives
- develop global citizenship
- understand how cultural diversity, social justice and personal development are integral elements of education for a sustainable development and how to make them a part of educational processes
- train their own ability to think in alternatives, weigh risks, deal with uncertainty and non-knowledge, as well as have the courage to imagine the future and create a vision, feel responsibility for the present and learn from the past
- practise a transformative pedagogy that engages learners in participative, systemic, creative and innovative thinking on the basis of knowledge about sustainability problems and perspectives
- act as an agent in a process of organisational learning that advances an educational institution towards a sustainable development
- reflect on the relationship among formal, non-formal and informal educational processes for a sustainable development, and be able to use this knowledge in their own professional work
- identify local learning opportunities for a sustainable development, and build cooperative relationships in the surrounding region.

A number of different models describing teacher competences in the field of education for a sustainable development have been recently developed: most notably the CSCT model (Sleurs 2008), the UNECE model (UNECE 2012), the KOM-BiNE model (Rauch and Steiner 2013; Rauch et al. 2008), as well as the approaches from Bertschy et al. (2013) and Künzli et al. (2013). The first steps to put it in concrete terms were undertaken by (a) the *Action Plan 2007–2014 (Maßnahmenplan) Education for Sustainable Development* of the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Directors for Education (kantonale Erziehungsdirektoren); (b) *A Cross-Curricular Framework for Global Development Education* by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK); and (c) the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Programmes of study for teachers should be further developed to meet these standards.

Such programmes could include a continuous programme of quality development in higher education for teacher education or the formal restructuring of teacher education. Accreditation processes should also be geared towards whether education for a sustainable development is a foundation of teacher education.

4

Education for sustainable development should provide fundamental orientation to teacher education programmes. Subject disciplines, subject didactics, educational sciences and practice-oriented studies should include methodology, principles and subject knowledge from education for a sustainable development in order to create an integrated teacher education programme.

4.1

A modularised curriculum could include modules on:

- basic concepts of education for sustainable development including the debates at an international level
- disciplinary as well as interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary views of key examples of problems in sustainable development
- project-oriented work on specific problems of local and national importance in cooperation with educational institutions and other regional partners
- research-based investigation of processes of education for a sustainable development
- practical experiences with approaches of education for a sustainable development and their critical reflection.

4.2

Education for a sustainable development requires internationalisation as an element of teacher education, in particular by making international debates about education for a sustainable development and discussions about cultural diversity integral components of modules. This means that students should be given the opportunity to study abroad, facilitating practical experiences, which should reflect their study programme.

4.3

Learning on the basis of real social challenges in local and regional contexts requires cooperation with external partners. Modules should thus enable access to external partners (such as communities, non-formal educational institutions, and networks for education for a sustainable development) and include possibilities for project-oriented collaboration.

#### 4.4

There should be a participative development of the content and the organisation of teacher education programmes. The evaluation of programme modules should be undertaken by teams of teachers and students who are interested in designing and implementing the study programme in line with the principles of an education for a sustainable development. The time needed for such work should be deducted from the normal teaching workload.

#### 5

In order to encourage innovation in the educational system – in this case in teacher education – it is crucial for the educational institution to have the necessary structural conditions as well as the freedom to engage in organisational learning processes. Government ministries and agencies are thus called upon to:

- establish education for a sustainable development as a foundation of government education policy, programmes of study and their curricula
- provide the freedom to create these programmes in such a way that education for a sustainable development can be realised as a concept that is continually evaluated and developed.

#### 6

Teachers should be granted the right to education for a sustainable development through vocational training. This would give them access to the necessary knowledge and competences to participate in the process of sustainable development. At the same time professional development is a prerequisite of reorienting educational processes and educational institutions in a common process.

Professional development for education for sustainable development should:

- be grounded on the principles and content of teacher education in institutions of higher education
- be addressed to more than only one teacher
- conclude with a certificate, which would be advantageous regarding applications, promotions, supplementary holidays etc.

#### 7

Institutions of higher education should be in a position to offer free professional courses for opinion leaders and decision-makers in educational policy (including members of ministries and school authorities, school directors, educational inspectors and educational providers). The social recognition of these courses should be enhanced through awards, prizes and public relations work.

8

Institutions of higher education should see themselves as places of learning and experience for a sustainable development and therefore orient their working processes and management towards principles of sustainability. This would also allow the educational institution to serve as a good example for the teacher education students.

9

National centres of competence for education for a sustainable development could develop targeted opportunities for professional development and advisory services, making use of the potential of government and non-governmental organisations as well as universities and other institutions of higher education. They should be accountable to a decision-making body made up of the regional institutions of higher education offering programmes in teacher education together with representatives of civil society. They could also take on the responsibility for national efforts in evaluation, networking and the further development of course offerings.

1 September 2014

Contact:

Prof. Dr. Ute Stoltenberg

Leuphana University Lüneburg Scharnhorststr.1

D-21335 Lüneburg stoltenberg@leuphana.de